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ABSTRACT

This study is the twentieth in a series of twenty reports completed by the Children's Environments Advisory Service for the International Year of the Child, 1979. The objective of the investigation was to examine the use of incentives to encourage desired housing quality improvements in new housing being built. Findings, conclusions and recommendations related to alternative forms of incentives and further action to be taken to implement a program of incentives are presented. Outcomes of the study are based on a series of consultations with representatives of various sectors of the housing industry as well as with staff of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation at its branch, regional and national offices. A list of representatives consulted regarding incentives for housing quality is appended. (Author/RH)

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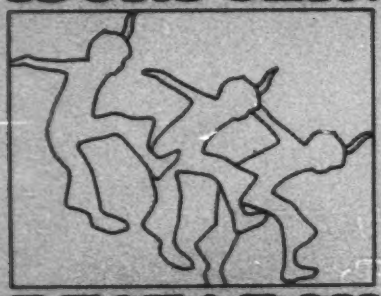

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CMHC's participation in the International Year of the Child.

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INCENTIVE AS AN AID FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF THE FAMILY HOUSING ENVIRONMENT: A POSITION PAPER

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INCENTIVES AS AN AID FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF THE FAMILY HOUSING ENVIRONMENT: A POSITION PAPER

TOM COYLE
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This project was supported by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation as part of the research program undertaken by the Children's Environment Advisory Service for the International Year of the Child.

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ABSTRACT

INCENTIVES AS AN AID FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF THE FAMILY HOUSING ENVIRONMENT: A POSITION PAPER

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The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has an on-going commitment to improving the quality of housing in Canada, -- one of their main priorities being Family Housing. Improvements in housing quality begin with the identification of problem areas and the development of suitable solutions. But ultimately, improvements are only attained with the actual application of the preferred solutions in the built environment.

This study examines the use of incentives as an aid for encouraging the application of desired housing quality improvements in the new housing being built. Findings, conclusions and recommendations concerning alternative forms of incentives and further action concerning a program of incentives for improving housing quality are presented, based on a series of consultations with representatives of various sectors of the housing industry as well as CMHC Branch, Regional and National Office staff.

PREFACE

The Children's Environments Advisory Service's Research and Development Program for the International Year of the Child has as its objective the advancement of good environmental planning and appropriate family housing design that supports the needs of children and youth (0-18).

An in-house CMHC IYC Committee, consisting of representatives of various CMHC divisions that impact on family housing and regional representatives, identified the gaps in the field. The committee selected projects of directed research to close these gaps and identify problem areas, to find solutions where possible, and to provide input to corporate policy and programs in the field of family housing. Five categories of investigation were selected to respond to these needs:

- Assembly/Production of Data

  To assemble a data bank on the condition of children in relation to their residential environment and to relate this data to data being collected by other departments and agencies.

- Evaluation

  To examine existing housing situation catering to the needs of families with children at home.

- Design and Awareness Material

  To develop proposals for improving housing and the surrounding environment through design.

- Demonstration

  To construct demonstration facilities for children, or to introduce improved facilities for children in on-going projects.

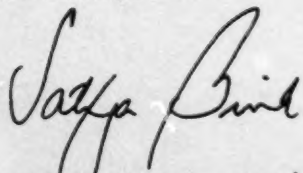
- Development of Policy Proposals

  To review the condition of children in Canada, and present proposals to meet or correct emerging problems in relation to housing.

The CMHC IYC Committee will develop for CMHC Management a policy paper based on the facts, figures and findings of the Research and Development Program for IYC, with implications for future policy, programs and research affecting family housing.

The Children's Environments Advisory Service plans to use the focus on children made possible by the Year of the Child to plan new directions for our service. We intend to conduct further research, provide additional resources and sustain the momentum of our advocacy role within CMHC.

This project is one of 21 projects (titles on last page) in the Research and Development Program for the International Year of the Child. These reports are distributed by the Children's Environments Advisory Service.



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INTRODUCTION

The subject of housing quality is an important and long-standing concern of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, which stems from its primary goal under the National Housing Act; to ensure that all Canadians have access to housing in a satisfying environment at a price they can afford. Family housing and the provision of an environment appropriate to the needs of the total family continues to be a priority issue within this general mandate. Over the years the Corporation has played a lead role in fostering and encouraging improvements in the quality of housing by influencing, through a variety of means: community planning practices, social development considerations, project design, building construction, housing management and financing procedures.

With the recent introduction of the "market share" approach the Corporation has reiterated its concern for the issue of housing quality by pointing out that the intent of these changes has not been, "to increase (the Corporation's) share of the market... for its own sake, but to increase the impact of the Corporation on the quality of housing".[1]

There are a number of ways in which the Corporation can influence housing quality. The purpose of this position paper is to examine the relevance of one specific option--the use of incentives--as a means of actively encouraging improvements in the quality of family housing environments.

The task of bringing about these improvements can be divided into three areas of activity: research (the identification of quality issues and suitable solutions for improving them), education (creating an awareness about the need for improvements and the appropriateness of the alternate solutions available) and application (concerned with getting the identified improvements implemented). This paper will focus on the last of these activities (though recognizing the critical role the other two have to play in the

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[1] CMHC, Mortgage Insurance Task Force; First Report (Internal Paper), (Ottawa: CMHC, 14 November 1979) p. 3.

process). The term "incentive" will be used in a broad sense in this paper to refer to any form of positive inducement intended to stimulate desired actions by others.

The first section of the paper describes the research approach used in this study and briefly discusses the concept of "housing quality". The next section suggests one possible approach for identifying key housing quality issues which is based on a better appreciation of residents' activities and needs. The resident group, "children and youth", which represents a very large and important segment of family housing, has been selected as an example to illustrate this approach. The third section of the paper deals with the role of incentives relative to the objective of improving housing quality. Section Four presents a summary of the findings of this study and discussion of possible options for an incentive program. The final section of the paper contains general conclusions and recommendations for future action.

One of the main reasons for selecting "children and youth" as a focus group in this paper is the fact that an increasing number of studies have suggested that many existing family housing developments have not been adequately planned to meet the needs of this group of residents.[2] Children and youth are, by far, the main users of the residential environment - a reality that conventional planning and marketing practices, for the most part, continue to ignore. The success of the family housing environment is dependent upon more than the provision of a few token play facilities; it is ultimately measured in terms of the ability of the whole residential environment to accommodate the full range of activities associated with the child-rearing process.

It is hoped that the observations and recommendations presented in this position paper will provide a useful direction and framework for further discussion by the Corporation on the use of incentives as an aid for improving the quality of housing in the future.

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[2]See references in Section Two of this paper as well as other studies recently completed as a part of CEAS's Research and Development Program.

SECTION ONE: THE STUDY APPROACH

The initial intention of this study was to concentrate on a review of documented experience concerning the use of incentives for promoting housing quality. However, the limited research material on this subject necessitated an alternative study approach, involving direct consultation with representatives of various sectors of the housing industry--including a developer, builder, municipal housing official and CMHC personnel from the National, Regional and Branch offices. (See Appendix A for a list of individuals consulted.) This consultative process was seen as a good method for soliciting and testing practical suggestions on the subject of incentives.

The consultations consisted of individual interviews with selected representatives. In each case a series of specific questions were asked dealing with: the individual's perception of what "housing quality" meant; whether they felt "housing quality" was an issue of concern; what specific quality aspects, if any, were of concern; what process did they use to identify quality issues; whether some type of incentive program would aid improvements in housing quality; and, what form of incentive would be most appropriate.

As an aid in stimulating a discussion on the form of incentives, a list of basic options was presented. The consultation sessions varied in length, typically running for about one hour.

One of the main problems encountered with this study was the lack of a commonly understood definition of "housing quality". The Corporation has, for some time, used the term, "housing quality" in discussing its objectives and functional activities,[3] but, nevertheless, it remains a term that has not been precisely defined with regards to CMHC's own interests and intentions. The concepts of housing quality that emerged from the consultation sessions were also extremely vague and mixed. The range of concepts

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[3]For examples, see President's speech at the CMHC Managers' Conferences, 1978 and 1980.

referred to by the respondents corresponded quite closely to three general concepts found in the literature:

i) the minimum standard concept - this definition of quality is related to efforts to establish basic standards for housing so as to ensure the provision of safe, sanitary accommodation (e.g., concept used for documents such as "Residential Standards", see also; Kirkland, 1972);

ii) the functional congruence or user "fit" concept - this definition emerged in conjunction with the evolution of studies of user response to the environment. It is concerned with assessing the degree to which the built environment is able to accommodate the range of day-to-day activities of the users of that environment--the better the "fit" between user needs and the environment, the better the quality (e.g., several of the Corporation's documents are based on this concept, such as, Site Planning Criteria, Play Spaces for Preschoolers, and other advisory design documents; see also, Michelson 1970, 1977; Perin, 1970);

iii) the market concept - this definition evolved out of efforts to quantify quality in dollar terms--it considers the housing environment as a "bundle of attributes" or features which collectively characterize different levels of value or quality. A rather informal version of this concept is commonly used in the development industry, where house prices are assumed to be a reflection of consumer acknowledgement of the relative value of the various features provided, (e.g., a concept upon which the Corporation's Market Appraisal System is based; see also, Maslove, 1977; Goedert and Goodman, 1977).

In view of this range of concepts it is understandable why there is some confusion over the use and definition of the term, housing quality, particularly when different concepts are frequently

interchanged with one another in discussions. It is not within the scope of this study to attempt to formulate a precise definition of housing quality but clearly such a reference point is needed, not only for the implementation of any recommended strategy for incentives but as a fundamental instrument for the formulation of housing policy and programs generally.

In the absence of a more precise operational definition, the term housing quality will be used in the context of this paper in a very broad sense, referring to an appropriate match of the built environment to current social, financial, functional and operational requirements. This general concept acknowledges the importance of many aspects in the determination of quality, such as; community context, site planning, design, construction and materials, maintenance, management and support services, and of course, cost.

Though the concept of housing quality is not a simple topic to deal with, the development of an operational definition suitable to the CMHC's purposes need not be an overly onerous task. The Corporation has ready access to a wealth of information that would provide a relevant basis for developing this definition, such as; numerous user studies and case studies funded by the Corporation and other housing authorities across the country, existing program evaluation and post-occupancy evaluation data, current advisory guidelines, various related Part V research as well as the practical knowledge of the Corporation field staff, and developers, designers and builders across the country.

The following section will discuss one possible approach for identifying housing quality issues which is related to the user "fit" concept of quality.

SECTION TWO: A REVIEW OF SELECTED USER STUDIES ON "CHILDREN AND YOUTH"

Given the multitude of factors to be considered in the design and development of a housing scheme it is important to find effective methods for highlighting priority issues that are most in need of improvement. One method that seems particularly suited to this purpose involves soliciting responses directly from the residents of existing housing environments. These types of studies, commonly referred to as user studies or "post-occupancy evaluations", can provide valuable insights into residents' interaction with their environment that help identify key housing quality concerns.

This section of the paper contains a review of a selected number of user studies, concentrating on the findings pertaining to a particularly significant group of users in family housing - "children and youth" (this categorization includes children in age from infancy to the upper teens). This review is intended as an illustration of the nature and extent of the housing quality concerns that can emerge from these types of studies as well as serving to indicate the apparent need for quality improvements for this particular group.

Though this review was not based on a comprehensive search of all the literature on this subject, the five sources selected do represent several of the most significant studies dealing with this user group. (One of the reasons for the limited number of studies reviewed is that few user studies have specifically focused on "children and youth" and conventional survey methodologies tend to preclude meaningful participation of this age group.)

The following is a list of the studies reviewed in this section:

I Space Outside the Dwelling Unit; A Review of selected Canadian Housing User Studies, prepared by CMHC, May 1974;

II User Generated Program for low-rise Multiple Dwelling Housing, prepared for CMHC by Robert J. Beck and Pierre Teasdale, Université de Montréal, 1977;

III Design for Living: The Residents' View of Multi-Family Housing, prepared for the New York State Urban Development Corporation by Franklin D. Becker and Lawrence Friedberg, Cornell University, 1974;

IV Easter Hill Village: Some Social Implications of Design, by Claire C. Cooper, 1975;

V Post-Occupancy Project Evaluation Report/Phase One, prepared for CMHC, June, 1978.

2.1 USER STUDIES

i) Space Outside the Dwelling Unit; A Review of Selected Canadian Housing User Studies

This report was prepared as a background study to the Corporation's work on revising its standards for site planning. It provides a useful review of the main user studies that had been completed in Canada, prior to August 1973, concerning the housing environment. The report is specifically concerned with findings from these studies that pertain to the provision of communal and recreational facilities and outdoor spaces. A total of sixteen studies are discussed in the report.

As the report points out, the focus, scope and methodology of the sixteen studies were extremely difficult and of limited reliability. Only a few of the studies were concerned with physical design issues and none specifically considered children as a separate user group. In view of the significant differences between the individual study approaches and the lack of specific design focus, only a very few, tentative conclusions were able to be drawn from these studies of relevance to the provision of "space outside the dwelling unit".

One of the most concrete observations to emerge from this review was that the lack of provision of facilities for children's activities appears to be a major issue in family housing. As pointed out in the conclusions to the report, those studies that dealt with family housing, "strongly suggest that children are underplanned for in many housing projects" (p. 30). The summary of the main findings from the sixteen studies underlines the concern expressed for the need for greater consideration of children's activities; "Dwellings designed to cater for any child population need places to accommodate facilities for their care and play". (p. 22)

The relative strength of the concern for

more attention to the provision of children's facilities that emerged from this review suggested a possible significant relationship between this issue to residents' overall satisfaction with their housing. This topic was specifically explored in more detail in subsequent studies undertaken by the Corporation--two of which are discussed below.

ii) User Generated Program for low-rise Multiple Dwelling Housing -

This research project, commissioned and directed by CMHC, was intended to generate information pertinent to the development of performance criteria for future housing environments from a detailed study of the use and response of residents living in a variety of low-rise forms of family housing. The results are based on an in-depth study of 75 families living in five different housing projects in three provinces (Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia).

A principle finding of this study, as described in the "Summary of a Research Project" report, was that, "some of the most critical design factors concern the suitability of the environment for children". (p. 6)

Mention of the various concerns and conflicts associated with children's activities occur frequently throughout the report as a part of the discussion of individual site features. A few examples of these statements are described below, in relation to the design element involved:

- Building Grouping - "families preferred buildings arranged in courts because they felt outdoor play in such areas was safer for children". (p. 12) "One of the most important factors for parents in evaluating their housing, was children's safety." (p. 16)

- Project Facilities - "Major factors contributing to residents' satisfaction were; A. Children's play facilities..." (p. 20) "Most residents felt that the suitability of the environment for children, particularly for children's outdoor play, was one of the

strongest factors in their general assessment of their housing". (p. 22, see also p. 24-30) "Parents reported that children had no place to play outdoors during the winter. Winter facilities were rarely provided but where they did exist they were greatly appreciated."

- Access - "One of the most important issues for families with children was that their housing should have direct access to the ground". (p. 79)

- Visual Access - "Residents felt it was very important that, particularly when in the kitchen, they could see their children (playing outside)..." (p. 84)

- Outdoor Living Area - "Residents liked their private outdoor areas to be easily accessible from the living area of the dwelling, preferrably at grade if they had children". (p. 112)

- Laundry - Residents' complaints about the laundry area included the concern that "there was nowhere for children to play". (p. 114)

The findings of this very detailed and extensive evaluation of residential settings clearly indicate the high priority these residents gave to the need to accommodate children's activities. In fact, it was one of the strongest factors affecting their overall assessment of the suitability of the project. (p. 22)

iii) Design for Living; The Residents' View of Multi-Family Housing -

The New York State Urban Development Corporation (UDC) sponsored this research, as a part of the larger evaluation program, in order to obtain information on how the housing they were providing was functioning for the residents, including adults, teenagers, elderly and children. A total of seven different projects were studied using four separate research instruments which resulted in a total of about 25% of the occupied units being surveyed in each project. The findings described in the report are the results of a comparison and compilation of findings from the individual projects.

Of all the aspects of the environment noted in the survey, residents satisfaction with children's play facilities ranked the lowest (p. 126). The report identifies the lack of suitable children's facilities as a major issue in the majority of the projects, suggesting in the chapter dealing with "Future Directions", that "Play areas for different age children and teenagers, in particular, are in serious need of improvement". (p. 29)

A comparison of the results from the individual projects indicated that the extent of satisfaction with the children's facilities, "appear in some way directly related to the number of physical facilities existing". (p. 126) Those projects with the more extensive facilities received correspondingly higher satisfaction ratings. Also, there was a highly significant and positive correlation between residents feeling that their development was a good place to raise children and their overall satisfaction with the housing environment. (p. 154)

The authors point out that children have strong desires to engage in a variety of challenging and interesting activities and if opportunities for such activities are not

deliberately provided for them that they are extremely creative in finding their own places within the housing site to suit their needs. Their ultimate selection of desirable play areas often has undesirable repercussions for other residents and management. "Much less damage would occur if these first symptoms (children's misuse of the environment) were used to diagnose problems and initiate a series of creative problem-solving sessions with those persons directly involved: the children". (p. 139)

This study also discusses the relative value of community versus project facilities, (a subject of debate in many projects) concluding that, "Planners should not plan on older children using community facilities several blocks away from the development as a substitute for on-site facilities. Community facilities do not serve the purposes of individual and spontaneous play". (p. 24)

iv) Easter Hill Village: Some Social Implications of Design

This study, which was originally initiated as a research project for a Master's thesis, involved an in-depth analysis of residents' response to the appropriateness of the physical design of a public housing project, containing 300 family units.

The results of this study have been published in a book entitled: Easter Hill Village: Some Social Implications of Design. One complete chapter of this book (Chapter Five) is devoted to a discussion of issues pertaining to children. The author points out at the beginning of this chapter, that one of the main reasons why children are such an important factor in the residential environment: "In both a spatial and a temporal sense, the chief users of the public areas in any residential neighbourhood are the children who live there". (p. 102) Yet, as this and many other user studies indicate, minimal attention is given to children's specific needs in the planning and design of environments outside of the school setting. As an example of this lack of consideration for children in the design of the housing environment, the author refers to a HUD handbook for designers of moderate income family housing, which consists of 495 pages of detailed design directives--with just one sentence referring to the needs of children. In view of this common lack of consideration for children's needs, the author notes, "it is not surprising to find that complaints about children's and teenage activities and the lack of varied and interesting facilities to keep them occupied figure importantly in virtually every documented case study of resident reactions to moderate--and high-density housing". (p. 104) (In the references to this chapter, on p. 124, the author notes nine other user studies reviewed that place a high priority on the issue of children's facilities.)

Problems with chlidren rated very high among the concerns of the residents in Easter Hill Village: "When residents were asked what they disliked about the neighbourhood, by far the most common complaint was the lack of play space for children and the annoyance caused by their playing in noisy groups in and around the houses". (p. 104)

This study makes a strong point of the fact, noted in many other studies as well, that not providing specific facilities for children's activities does not mean that these activities will not take place. In the absence of appropriately designed environments children will create their own play opportunities, often in areas considered very inappropriate for that purpose by other residents and management staff. In fact, in the Easter Hill Village study, one of the groups most concerned and dissatisfied with the lack of children's play facilities were the adult residents without children.

v) Post-Occupancy Project Evaluation Report/ Phase One

The main object of the Phase One work was to develop and test a number of different evaluation techniques in an effort to determine the extent to which post-occupancy evaluations could assist the Corporation in improving the quality of housing financed by CMHC.

In Phase One a total of 35 medium-density family projects from five provinces were surveyed, using one or more of four separate evaluation techniques developed in this testing phase. Two of these four techniques - the project survey and group interview - involved a detailed evaluation of the quality of specific design features of the housing project.

In the Summary of the project survey results, "inadequate children's play facilities" was identified as the aspect of greatest concern with regards to the overall project layout and designing of communal facilities.[4] Of all the issues identified in the Project Surveys (including aspects of interior layout and management/maintenance) the lack of children's facilities is one of two issues that received the largest number of mentions.

In the findings of the Group Interview surveys the issue of children's facilities again ranked very high - second highest of the project design aspects of greatest concern.[5]

The Phase One work was intended as the first stage of an on-going effort to develop an evaluation system that would provide a source of information for improving the quality of housing

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[4]CMHC "Post-Occupancy Project Evaluation Report", Vol. II, (in-house report) 1978, p. 14.

[5]CMHC, "Post-Occupancy Project Evaluation Report; Group Interviews, Key Issues Identified", Vol. I (unpublished in-house report), 1978.

and increasing the level of residents' satisfaction with their housing environment. The inital stage of this project was conceived as a vehicle for assessing a broad range of housing quality features in an effort to obtain an indication of key priority issues. It was felt that subsequent work could then be more specifically focused on these priority topics. One of the major priority issues to emerge from the Phase One findings was the lack of consideration of children's needs in the planning and development of family housing environments.

2.2 SUMMARY

This brief review of selected studies of family housing developments clearly suggests that the provision of housing environments suited to the needs of children and youth is a major determinant of resident's satisfaction with their housing environment. The level of concern expressed about the inadequacy of existing housing projects for child-rearing activities indicates that much more care and attention must be given to the activity needs of children and youth in the design and planning of the residential environment.

These and other user studies contain similar information regarding various user groups and features of the housing environment that would provide a relevant basis for identifying housing quality issues.

And yet, as noted in the previous section, user studies are just one of the many sources of information the Corporation could draw upon to develop a priority list of housing quality features in need of improvement.

SECTION THREE: THE ROLE OF INCENTIVES

There are several basic ways to encourage the application of desired quality improvements which involve the use of:

i) mandatory requirements (e.g., regulatory standards, minimum approval criteria);

ii) persuasion and advice (e.g., advisory documents, project negotiations), and;

iii) incentives (e.g., special concessions, bonuses, awards).

The Corporation has used mandatory requirements in the past, and to a lesser extent still continues to use them, to ensure that minimum standards are being met in the housing financed under the NHA. However, CMHC's decision to adopt a consultative style as a part of the new "Market Share" approach has involved a conscious decision to move away from the use of regulatory powers towards persuasion and advice, in the review and approval of private sector housing, as a means of encouraging quality.

Past experience with persuasion and advisory criteria in the approval process suggests there are definite limitations on the extent to which they can affect improvements in the housing being produced. For example, a survey of senior citizens' housing projects in British Columbia pointed out that CMHC's existing advisory guidelines had very little influence on the final design.[6] (This is inspite of the fact that both the designers and Branch staff had access to the guidelines, "Housing the Elderly", regarded by specialists and practitioners in the field as a relevant source of design information for this user group.)

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[6]Gloria Gutman, Senior Citizens Housing Study: After the Move - A Study of Reactions to Multi and Uni-Level Accommodation for Seniors, Ottawa: CMHC, June, 1976, p. 91.

Changes in the negotiating practices of the Corporation's staff, planned as a part of the shift to the consultative style, should help improve the degree of effectiveness of the advisory approach. However, the question remains as to how much will it improve the effectiveness? From the discussions held with industry representatives as a part of the study, there was a general feeling that there will continue to be a reluctance within the industry to accept many of the ideas for housing improvements. The main reasons given for this reluctance were:

i) the belief that quality improvements will involve additional costs which will increase the price of housing. It seems that many suggested improvements are viewed in this manner regardless of evidence or claims of their advocates to the contrary. Many quality improvements would not involve any added costs but rather are concerned with better planning or wiser use of conventional resources (many recommended improvements for children's facilities fall into this category-- where some facilities are currently being provided but are frequently of the wrong type or badly located). Other improvements may involve only temporary cost increases while the industry adapts to new ways of doing things (the introduction of new building systems often follow this pattern). And still other features are indeed more costly but involve either long-term user or economic benefits that are not always perceived initially. Often these ideas need to be built, even on a limited basis, in order to demonstrate to consumers and builders their advantages (many changes recommended using a life-cycle costing approach would fall into this category, such as special energy conserving features).

ii) the improvements advocated by others often are not of prime importance to the consumer. Builders are reluctant to include features that are not reflected in consumer preference of one product over another, nor in the market price (many "hidden" features fall into this category, such as, increased insulation and better quality servicing or mechanical systems);

iii) the housing market process is essentially conservative and relies on a "rear-view mirror" approach. Marketing decisions are, for the most part, based on proven successes and new ideas not widely accepted in the market are considered a "risk". In these cases the nature of the consumer response is not known so builders do not wish to abandon proven patterns to experiment with the unknown. They see little or no advantage in taking risks of this kind under favourable market conditions, (e.g., more efficient unit and lot layouts, new building and siting configurations to improve solar efficiency or the provision of special children's facilities such as adventure playgrounds, are seen as "risks").

All of these reasons are valid areas of concern to the housing industry and, as such, constitute very real impediments to change. The conservative nature of both the housing consumer and the housing industry serve to slow the rate of acceptance of new ideas often creating a gap between the time when a new idea is first conceived, to the point where it is sufficiently accepted to constitute a part of a changed or "new" market, (e.g., the introduction of energy conservation features).

Similar impediments to change exist within many agencies responsible for development control standards. For example, the housing industry has been pressuring for years to get local municipalities to reduce their higher standards for subdivision

servicing. However, despite technical studies[7] that support their claims few changes have occurred.

One of the most effective ways of overcoming these impediments, without having to institute new mandatory regulations, is through the provision of some form of incentive that will be sufficient to negate or compensate for any real or perceived concerns about the proposed changes. The use of incentives to facilitate the implementation of quality improvements, even on a limited basis, can provide tangible evidence and examples of the financial, functional and/or social benefits involved that will encourage wider application of these new ideas.

Incentives are commonly used, by governments at all levels, to permit more direct influence on decisions in situations where the government body is either unable or unwilling to use regulatory powers or to depend totally on persuasion. Often incentives are employed as a means of correcting inconsistencies or inadequacies between normal market interests and government policy (e.g., regional economic expansion, resource exploration, technological advances).

Private industry, also regularly relies on incentives of various kinds to stimulate interest in its activities or products and to attract new clientele. Frequently incentives are offered with the introduction of a new product or with changes or improvements to an existing product line.

A program of incentives could be a useful complementary device within the consultative process, providing an opportunity for the Corporation to increase its influence on quality improvements, particularly in areas where advice and persuasion is having limited success.

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[7] For example see Ontario Ministry of Housing, Urban Development Standards: A Demonstration of Potential for Reducing Costs, Toronto, MOH, 1976 (this is an example of a "quality" improvement that would involve a reduction in costs--i.e., one aspect of quality = more cost effective).

SECTION FOUR: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF INCENTIVE OPTIONS

4.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS -

There was considerable consistency in the response of the individuals consulted. Not unexpectedly, their perceptions of what "housing quality" means were typically vague and general: relating either to cost-effectiveness, quality of materials and construction or functional suitability.

Yet despite the lack of a precise definition for the term, the majority of respondents said they felt that housing quality was currently an issue of concern for the industry. The two most common explanations being: firstly, that as a result of tighter economic conditions the housing consumer was becoming more conscious and demanding of better "quality" features (e.g., energy conserving features, low-maintenance materials, better on-site recreational opportunities for the whole family). The second reason for concern was the fear that with continued rapid escalation in production costs many developers may be forced to "cut-corners" in order to maintain prices within reach of the lower portion of the housing market.

Few respondents were prepared to be more specific in their discussion of problem areas because of lack of detailed information. None of the people interviewed indicated having any formal monitoring procedures of quality factors within their own organization (though several CMHC personnel suggested that the current work on Post-Occupancy Evaluation may provide a source of information in the future).

Some of the main considerations about the use of incentives for improving housing quality that emerged from the consultations are:

- that the added review and approval procedures for an incentive program could conceivably lead to further delays, thus negating the appeal of such a program;

- there is a potential for conflict between improved housing quality and affordability objectives. Any incentive program would have to be structured so as to be consistent with the Corporation's commitment to providing affordable housing;

- the financial incentive offered should be controlled so as to reduce the price of housing rather than merely adding to developers profits;

- that the incentive program should be seen as a part of a large program of education directed at both consumers and builder/developers concerning housing quality issues.

Finally, there was a general consensus that further improvements of quality in housing are both needed and desirable. The house building and development representatives were particularly interested in the concept of an incentive program and felt the idea would be well received by the industry. The Corporation staff had mixed reactions to the idea. Though most agreed that an incentive program was needed, several doubted whether such a program would have any real impact on the industry as whole. Many of their reservations were linked to their desire for a more precise understanding of what the focus and objectives of the incentive program would be before passing judgement.

4.2 INCENTIVE OPTIONS

As a means of encouraging discussion of a range of possible procedures for implementing a program of incentives a number of options were presented that related to the following three basic forms of incentive:

A) Loan Amount Increases;
B) Grants and Subsidies; and,
C) Publicity and Endorsements

One or more program options for each of these three categories, are described below in terms of: the method involved, relative advantages and disadvantages, and examples of any similar procedures used by the Corporation. The discussion of each of these options assumes the existence of a definition and criteria for identifying quality features or quality housing.

A) Loan Amount Increases:

The method would involve the allocation of a specified increase to the approved loan amount for housing that includes prescribed quality features. The incentive would be the reduction in the equity that the developer or homeowner would have to put up for these housing units.

The main advantages of this procedure are: firstly, that it involves no additional capital expenditures for the Corporation; and secondly, it would not involve any new administrative structures as it could be implemented using existing procedures.

A potential disadvantage would be that the inclusion of these special quality features could lead to the setting of higher house prices or rents.

Recent modifications to the Corporation's Appraisal System presently permits the appraiser to reflect higher

quality in their consideration of value. However, it appears that this discretionary power has had very limited use--partly due to the ambiguity of what a "quality" project means. With a precise specification of preferred quality features the Corporation wished to encourage, the loan amount increase could be more readily employed as a device for fostering improvements.

B) Subsidies and Grants:

For all four options identified in this category it is assumed that the Corporation could restrict the financial incentives to only moderate priced housing through appropriate regulations such as maximum house price or family income restrictions.

Bi) Preferred Interest Rates -

This procedure would provide preferred rates of interest for approved quality projects.

The incentive is the obvious financial advantage of the lower interest. In the freehold market, the financial benefit would go to the homeowner and the incentive to the developer/builder would come from the improved saleability of the housing with lower interest rates would have. For the rental sector, the benefit would be received by the developer (though the approval agreement could include stipulations on rental scales so as to ensure some benefit is transferred to the tenant as well).

The ability to give the financial benefits directly to the homeowner, in the

freehold situation, is a potential advantage of this option. The major disadvantage would be in determining how and when to terminate the interest subsidy. The readjustment to the full interest rates could create problems for some owners similar to those experienced with AHOP.

The Corporation of course, currently uses preferred interest rates in its assisted housing programs.

Bii) Directed Program of Grants to Underwrite Quality Features

In this case a direct grant would be made available for housing with approved quality features. For freehold housing the grant could be made to either the developer/builder or to the new homeowner. In the rental sector the developer would be the recipient of the grant.

If the grant were given to the homeowner the incentive to the developer would come from the increased sales appeal this housing would have.

The advantage of this option is that it is a one-time payment that would minimize administrative problems and if distributed to the homeowner it could have considerable public appeal. In order to restrict the demands on limited resources, regulations governing homeowner qualification would likely be necessary which would reduce its public appeal and could create its own political problems.

Precedents for this type of option can be found in the previous "First time homeowner grants" and the current CHIP grants.

Biii) Responsive Grant Program -

This program would make grants available to underwrite innovative new ideas. Unlike the previous case, the responsive program would not have a predetermined set of quality features but would request the submission of suitable ideas from the housing industry.

The advantage of this approach is that it provides an opportunity for encouraging a wide variety of innovative ideas. One of the disadvantages is that because of its responsive component it would be more difficult to decentralize the approval process and still maintain a consistent and equitable basis of assessment. A centralized process of review would increase the likelihood of delays in the approval process.

This option is quite similar in approach to the recently announced Housing Technology Incentive Program.

Biv) Grants to Municipalities for Housing Quality Programs -

One of the main subjects of discussion with regards to improved housing quality was the high standards for subdivision servicing and lot sizes still required by many municipalities. It was felt that the considerable costs that could be saved by lower municipal standards (with no effective reduction in quality) could be used to augment the quality in other aspects of housing. The intent of this procedure is two-fold: a) to encourage municipalities to modify inappropriate standards; b) to seek improvements in the quality of new housing. This procedure would provide

grants to municipalities (perhaps on a per unit basis) which would be conditional on an agreement to permit modified standards for approved quality projects. The determination of the selection criteria for quality projects could be determined jointly by CMHC and the local municipality. The incentive for municipalities to consider permitting modified standards is the cash grant; the attraction to the developer to provide the desired quality features is the financial savings to be gained from the modified standards (e.g., increased densities, savings on servicing, etc.).

The advantage of this option is the opportunity to encourage improvements in a number of areas. A potential disadvantage could be the time required for municipalities to gain local approval for the modifications desired. (Competition for limited funds could help speed up the process of obtaining approvals for those municipalities interested in the program.)

The earlier "Municipal Incentives Grant Program" employed a somewhat similar grant arrangement.

C) Publicity and Endorsements

This procedure would involve public acknowledgement of selected quality housing developments by CMHC. The incentive to the developer in this case would be the publicity as well as the added consumer confidence that would be gained from CMHC's approval of the project which would improve sales or rentals.

One obvious advantage of this option for the Corporation is that it would involve little or no costs. A possible disadvantage could be the fact that the CMHC would be directly involved in a form of endorsement of private development projects.

Some people have suggested that the CHDC awards serve this role now. However, the industry representatives felt that the CHDC program was of little or no benefit to the actual marketing of housing since most of the awards are given after the projects are occupied. They suggest that though these awards were nice to get, they did not constitute any form of incentive for them. Several people also expressed the opinion that the CHDC program was too aesthetically oriented and was not related to basic quality issues.

Table 1 attached contains a summary of this review of incentive options.

PROCEDURE	INCENTIVE	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES	PRECEDENTS	REVIEWER REACTIONS
A. LOAN AMOUNT INCREASES	higher loan amount reduces developer/ homeowner equity input	no capital expenditures required and would use existing admin. procedures	could potentially encourage increase in house prices and rentals	current appraisal system permits increase in value adjustment for quality	considered a feasible option
B. SUBSIDIES AND GRANTS					
i) PREFERRED INTEREST RATES	lower interest rates provide for low mortage payments	provides a mechanism for giving financial benefits directly to the homeowner in freehold situations	would require additional administrative work and could create problems when preferred rates are terminated	interest rate reductions for assisted housing programs	reservations about this option due to the problems with AHOP
ii) DIRECTED PROGRAM OF GRANTS TO UNDERWRITE QUALITY FEATURES	cash grant to reduce costs (developer) or price (consumer)	one-time cash grant simplifies administration and potential for giving grants directly to the new homeowner	in order to restrict demand for grants restriction on eligibility would be required which could have negative political reaction	"First-time Homeowner grants" and CHIP grants	impression homeowner and CHIP grant program well received by public
iii) RESPONSIVE GRANT PROGRAM	cash grant for innovative ideas to reduce development/ production costs	encourages the industry to come forward with variety of new ideas	evaluation tends to be more complex and therefore more difficult to decentralize in order to ensure consistent and equitable application	recent "Housing Technology Incentive Program"	concern that these types of programs tend to prolong the approval process, especially if not decentralized, which would reduce appeal of program

PROCEDURE	INCENTIVE	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES	PRECEDENTS	REVIEWER REACTIONS
B.					
iv) GRANTS TO MUNICIPALITIES FOR HOUSING QUALITY PROGRAMS	cash grant to municipalities provided they agree to modify local requirements for quality projects. Incentive to developer is the financial gains from modified municipal standards	potential to encourage improvements both at the municipal level and in the development industry. Municipalities could assist in the administration of the program - good potential for decentralization	negotiations and time required to gain municipal approvals to changes in local standards could take time (though competition for limited funds could speed up involvement of interested municipalities)	Municipal Incentive Grant Program	very favourable response - felt improvements in municipal requirements major factor for affordability and quality
C. PUBLICITY AND ENDORSEMENTS OF QUALITY PROJECTS	identification and public acknowledgement of quality projects would help saleability and compensate for any "risk" involved	little or no capital costs involved for the Corporation and therefore application of such a program would not have to be restricted due to funding limitations	initial participation could be slow as the "incentive" in such a program would likely have to be first demonstrated to majority of proponents		interest in this option expressed by many Corporation staff

SECTION FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 CONCLUSIONS

The consultations with representatives of both CMHC and the building industry undertaken as a part of this study have indicated a need for an interest in improving the quality of housing built in the future. However, it was apparent from these discussions that there is currently a lack of research and information pertaining to the qualitative factors of the family housing environment. Yet in those cases where somewhat more empirical data is available, such as for "children and youth", there is ample evidence that there is need for specific improvements in the planning, construction and management of family housing environments in the future.

The conclusion of this study is that the Corporation's efforts to bring about improvements in the quality of family housing will need more than just advice and persuasion to succeed and that some form of incentive program as a complement to the new consultative process would be a definite aid.

It is recognized that the development of the necessary supporting information, policies and procedures for a comprehensive program of incentives (e.g., covering aspects such as construction, servicing, functional design, layout and management) will require time and, as such, should constitute a long-term objective (i.e., 12 to 24 months). In the interim, a short-term objective (i.e., within 6 months) should be to rely on readily available procedure to provide incentives in order to immediately address known problem areas, (such as, better environments for child-rearing activities in family housing). The interim program would serve to demonstrate the Corporation's commitment to actively encouraging quality improvements while providing an opportunity to test some preliminary strategies that will contribute to the development of a more comprehensive program.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation adopt as a long-term objective (12 to 24 months) the development of a comprehensive program of incentives to improve housing quality;

2. as a short-term objective (6 months), the Corporation should test some possible approaches to incentives by focusing initially on known priority areas;

3. the Corporation consider the need for improvements in the quality of family housing environments as a key priority area for an interim program of incentives;

4. the Children's Environment Advisory Service (CEAS) be requested to develop a set of performance criteria that will describe the desired qualities of an appropriate family housing environment that will serve as the project approval criteria for an interim incentive program for family housing improvements, to be implemented by mid-1981;

5. the short-term incentive program be based on the procedure of Loan Amount Increases (option A, described on page 24-25) in the interest of minimizing the capital cost and organizational requirements for this interim program;

6. in the development of the comprehensive incentive program, consideration be given to the procedure "Grants to Municipalities for Housing Quality Programs" (option B iv on page 27) as this option offers an opportunity to influence change on a number of levels and facilitates local participation in determining key quality issues. This option received the most favourable reaction in the consultation sessions.

7. in association with the incentive program the Corporation should undertake a general program of education and awareness building concerning housing quality issues, directed at both consumers and builder/developers. In this regard, consideration should be given to the potential educational and promotional value of the system of awards discussed under "Publicity and Endorsements" (option C). Such a promotional device in conjunction with the recommended program of financial incentives would provide a variety of opportunities for encouraging improvements in housing quality.

APPENDIX

REPRESENTATIVES CONSULTED REGARDING INCENTIVES FOR HOUSING QUALITY

- HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION OF CANADA (HUDAC)
  - John Sandusky (Sandbury Homes Ltd.)
    Past President - Ontario Branch, HUDAC

- URBAN DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE (UDI)
  - Mel Wardman (Bunting, Wardman Ltd.)
    Past President - UDI

- CITY OF TORONTO NON-PROFIT HOUSING CORPORATION
  - Richard Peddie, Deputy Director

- CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION

  NATIONAL OFFICE
  - Roger Wambolt/Appraisal Division
  - Pierre Lacroix/Management Services Division
  - Polly Hill/Adviser - Children's Environment Advisory Service
  - Satya Brink/Assistant Adviser - CEAS

  ONTARIO REGIONAL OFFICE
  - Joe Shimwell/Assistant Manager - Field Support Centre
  - Dallard Runge/Coordinator - Planning and Research
  - Ken Holder/Manager - Operations Staff

  TORONTO BRANCH OFFICE
  - Barbara Lee/Program Manager - Social Housing
    Stan Purvis/Branch Appraiser
    Wazir Dayal/Architect-Planner - Private Sector Housing

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PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY CMHC AS PART OF THE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM UNDERTAKEN BY THE CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENTS ADVISORY SERVICE (CEAS) FOR THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE CHILD

The research reports from the following projects are available through the CEAS Resource Service from CMHC National Office and CMHC Regional Offices.

1. INTERNATIONAL INVENTORY AND COMPARATIVE STUDY OF LEGISLATION OF PLAY SPACES

   This will provide a basis for comparison of CMHC standards and policies with those of other countries, regarding the allocation of space for children in the residential environment and is seen as a resource for municipalities establishing such standards.

   Aussi disponible en français.

2. HOUSING CANADA'S CHILDREN - A DATA BASE

   The compiled statistics will provide a profile of Canadian children and their housing.

3. MAINTENANCE AND RETROFITTING COSTS OF CHILD-RELATED FACILITIES IN THE REAL ESTATE PORTFOLIO

   Life cycle costing of child-related facilities and maintenance costs due to lack of child-related facilities will be used to determine cost effective solutions.

4. EVALUATION OF EXTERIOR FACILITIES FOR CHILDREN IN THREE LOW INCOME PROJECTS

   The report will provide an evaluation of three approaches to play space design in terms of play experiences, use by different age groups, accessibility, and resident satisfaction, using a technique that allows children to respond naturally.

5. CHILD'S PERCEPTION OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

   The study will document how children use selected urban neighbourhoods that vary in character and the influence of the design of the neighbourhood on the children's activities.

6. HOUSING NEEDS OF URBAN NATIVE FAMILIES - A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CHILDREN'S AND PARENTS PERCEPTIONS

   A study of the needs of native children and their parents in the area of housing, neighbourhood and community, on the basis of which housing strategies can be developed to respond to their needs in the urban setting.

7. WORKSHOP: "HOUSING THE FAMILY IN 2001", FOURTH CANADIAN CONFERENCE ON CHILDREN

   The report deals with the changing family structure, the needs of children and the suitability of present forms of neighbourhood design to house the future family.

8. LOST AND FOUND: RECYCLING SPACE FOR CHILDREN

   The study deals with the identification of waste or unused spaces in residential projects and design suggestions to recycle them into play spaces for children.

9. OUT OF THE CELLAR AND INTO THE PARLOUR - GUIDELINES FOR THE ADAPTATION OF RESIDENTIAL SPACE FOR THE CARE OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN

   The study will utilize existing knowledge of indoor and outdoor environmental requirements of children in order to accommodate the developmental needs of pre-schoolers in conventional family living space.

10. PRAIRIE WINTER PLAY PATTERNS

    The project goal is to provide for children's play during the winter months, and will be conducted in two parts: (a) A study of social and environmental factors influencing children's activities in winter, and (b) A study of climatic, topographical and environmental factors that must be considered in the design of winter play facilities that accommodate physical, social, creative and intellectual play.

11. DESIGN CRITERIA FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SHELTERED PLAY SPACE IN MEDIUM TO HIGH DENSITY FAMILY HOUSING PROJECTS IN THE ATLANTIC REGION

    The report will examine the need for sheltered play facilities in high density family housing projects and recommend design details such as location, size, space allocation, construction materials, and play facilities.

12. PROJET PARAPLUIE - A USER GENERATED SHELTER DESIGN FOR THE RECREATION OF SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN IN A MONTREAL PROJECT

    The report will document a procedure that was used to involve school age children and their parents in the design, implementation, maintenance, and management of a sheltered play space, as a possible model for other residential developments.

    Aussi disponible en français

13. GUIDELINES FOR THE SELECTION OF CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS, CONSTRUCTION METHODS, LANDSCAPE MATERIALS AND VEGETATION USED IN PLAY SPACES

    An inventory of materials, finishes and methods with a description of qualitative characteristics and possible use in a play space in terms of user groups, climatic conditions, availability and maintenance will be produced.

14. PLAY SPACES TO ACCOMMODATE DISABLED CHILDREN

    Design suggestions will be developed for an integrated play space that accommodates both disabled and normal children.

15. CHILDREN'S PLAY SPACES ON ROOF DECKS

    The study will result in design suggestions that deal with the technical aspects, such as drainage, containment, and control of the microclimate, as well as the provision of stimulating play opportunities for child users.

16. LA SECURITÉ DES ENFANTS VS LA CIRCULATION - AUTO

The study will analyze accident statistics and traffic patterns in selected multiple housing projects and develop design suggestions in terms of traffic separation, lighting, landscaping, barriers, etc., to minimize the conflict between automobiles and children.

17. A CASE STUDY OF A COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PROCESS FOR IMPROVING A NEIGHBOURHOOD TO BE MORE SUPPORTIVE OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH.

The case study will identify the process of community participation, the mechanisms available, the problems faced, and the resources tapped, and will serve as a model for other communities.

18. ADAPTATION OF CMHC DESIGN GUIDELINE ADVISORY DOCUMENT "PLAY OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN, 6-14 YEARS", TO MUNICIPAL LEGISLATION

An example or model policy guideline on planning for play for school age children that is applicable to the municipal residential development control approval process and is written in such a way as to be easily adopted by municipalities.

19. MANAGING URBAN SPACE IN THE INTEREST OF CHILDREN

The proceedings of the International Symposium, dealt with the allocation of urban space to respect children's interests and the political, legal and socio-economic conditions required for various forms of organizations to function adequately. The report has been published by "Man and his Biosphere", the organizers of the symposium. Requests received will be forwarded to "Man and his Biosphere".

20. INCENTIVES AS AN AID FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF THE FAMILY HOUSING ENVIRONMENT: A POSITION PAPER

The position paper will investigate alternatives which can serve as incentives to developers under the National Housing Act, to provide children's facilities within residential developments.

21. MONOGRAPH SERIES

Titles will be announced in the CEAS newsletter.